

August 9, 1994; Nov. 3, 1996

May 11, 1973: All Charges Dismissed

Pandemonium. Cheering, hugging, crying, wild laughter. It started with a roar--in a courtroom where any hint of feeling from the spectators had been silenced peremptorily over the last four months--as soon as the judge finished his statement, and he made little effort to stop it. He asked that the jurors be allowed to leave through the back, then he turned around in his black robes and followed them out. The press ran to the phones; the prosecution team packed up wordlessly and left the courtroom to us. It seemed to be spinning, tilting. Patricia and I came to each other and kissed, a long time.

When we poured out into the sunlight on the steps of the Federal Courthouse, to the sea of TV cameras and flashbulbs, someone held up the headline on the morning's paper: "Mitchell Indicted."

John Mitchell, the man who had indicted me, the first of my Attorney-Generals to face prison. He was soon to be followed by Kleindienst, who had presided over my prosecution until he had resigned two weeks earlier along with Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Dean. And all the White House aides assigned to neutralize me, the CIA contract agents and other Cuban-Americans ordered to incapacitate me totally. They all went down.

Months later, when Mitchell, like Ehrlichmann and others, got a second indictment on separate charges, a network representative called me up for my reaction. I didn't want to say anything prejudicial on these occasions, or sound gloating. I said, "Like any American citizen in this situation, he's entitled to a fair trial. In fact, the grand jury seems to think he's entitled to several fair trials."

Now, on the morning my own case had been dismissed, I was asked what I felt about Mitchell's indictment (his first). I said: "I've been on trial for almost two years now, in court every day for the last four months. I don't think I'm ready to go cold turkey right away. Maybe I'll spend some time going to other people's trials."

Not really. It would be quite a while before Patricia and I were anxious to be in a courtroom again, no matter whose. Years earlier, a RAND Corporation colleague of mine, a former pilot, had gone off to become an astronaut. After circling the moon, he came back to RAND to give a briefing about it and someone asked him how long it took his body to adjust to zero gravity. He said, "About twenty minutes." After a pause he said, "I say that because people can't believe the real answer. Two seconds. Your body loves zero gravity."

The truth is, it doesn't take long to adjust to not being on trial. We were the first to find that out, in just this way. No

Federal trial had ever had charges dismissed, before going to the jury, for reason, as Judge Byrne had put it, of "a gross pattern of governmental misconduct...that offends a sense of justice." Till this morning.

Floating freely, we answered questions at this last press conference until someone finally asked how I planned to spend the rest of my life. I had my arm around Patricia, who was at my side, as she had been ever since I gave the Papers to the Senate. I gave the real answer: "I want to make love with my wife in every kind of climate."

And so we have. So we do.